



**Court Interpreter Services
U.S. District Court, Central District of California**

**Orientation for Contract Court Interpreters
TRANSLATION OF TAPES, VIDEOTAPES, AND COMPACT DISCS**

The written transcriptions and translations of tapes, videotapes, and compact discs are considered legal documents and are to be submitted in a professional form suitable for duplication and presentation to the court or jury. They are to be presented on white bond paper, typed, or under certain special circumstances handwritten in ink¹. The transcription² and translation of the source language content of the recorded material must include all conversations, utterances and sounds. Words or portions of conversation which are inaudible or unintelligible should be indicated as such by placing the word [inaudible] or [unintelligible] in their place. The voices heard in the recording should be identified solely by gender and order in the conversation. Thus a conversation between a male and female would be indicated by a MV1 and FV1 (Male voice 1 and Female voice 1). Should a second male enter the conversation, his words would be indicated by a MV2. When the translator is asked to identify the speakers by name on the transcript/translation, the source of that information **must** be indicated, i.e., [Translator's note: identity of speakers provided by]. This is imperative as the translator cannot have any independent knowledge of the speakers' identities as he/she was not a party to the recorded transaction.

MEETING DEADLINES

Transcriptions/translations of recorded material are projects to be accepted only with full cognizance of their major importance as potential evidence. Timely completion is critical to the court. Upon receipt of the materials, the interpreter/translator should immediately listen to the recordings in order to determine his/her ability to perform the task and to meet the deadline for delivery of the completed project. The interpreter who accepts the project is duty-bound to notify

¹On occasion, the interpreter is asked to review a transcription/translation done by another translator. It may be more expedient for the interpreter to make handwritten notes directly on the existing transcription/translation to indicate any discrepancies that may exist between the material submitted for review and the source. For purposes of an estimate, it should take approximately 10 minutes of work time to review one page of transcription/translation while listening to the source recording.

²Check whether a transcription is needed, or whether a translation from the source language is sufficient.



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the interpreters office (or the party requesting the work) immediately--no later than 24 hours after receiving the work--as to any technical or language problem that might hinder the project or delay its timely completion. The successful prosecution or defense in a case may hinge on the timely presentation of the document. Missing the deadline may result in the translator's not receiving any further translation assignments.

It is not unusual for the translator to be called to testify at a later date regarding a transcription/translation and under certain circumstances the court may issue an order to produce additional copies of the work. The translator should maintain a personal reference file containing hard copies or floppy/compact disks of documents translated. These file copies should be kept for a period of no less than one year from the date of submission of the work.

A Declaration of Interpreter form must accompany each translation. This form must be filled out completely, and signed. It must include the name of the party requesting the work, case name and number, and number of pages of transcription/translation.

BILLING FOR TRANSCRIPTION/TRANSLATION WORK

The estimated cost of a transcription/translation project is based on an approximate relationship of 1(one) minute of recording to between 30 to 60 minutes of anticipated transcription/translation work. This formula, though useful for making estimates, is *never* to be utilized for purposes of billing. It is an imprecise calculation that ignores the complexity (or lack of complexity) of the task at hand. The invoice submitted should reflect the **actual time worked** in listening, transcribing, researching and translating the materials. The actual time worked will be affected by the clarity (or lack of clarity) of the source, the number of speakers, the subject matter involved, the complexity of the language utilized and other factors. The final invoice submitted for payment will require an attached work log of the actual time worked, including dates and start and stop clock times to support the final total number of hours claimed on the invoice.

All tape/CD transcription/translation is related to either the prosecution or defense of a case. For work requested by the U.S. attorney's office, use Standard Form 1034 (with a document control number) for billing. If the work is payable under the Criminal Justice Act, keep in mind that if the



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total amount exceeds \$300.00, a court order authorizing the expenditure is needed; in the case of the public defender, a pre-approved CJA voucher has to be obtained. Do not start work on a project that is likely to exceed the \$300.00 limit without a court order, or, in the case of a public defender request, a pre-approved CJA voucher.

INTERPRETER/TRANSLATOR CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

The interpreter/translator must sign and attach a Declaration of Interpreter form to the finished product. This statement, *signed under penalty of perjury*, is a declaration that the translation is true and correct and that it is the product of that interpreter's personal assessment of the source language content of the recording.